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ISIDORA.

From the German of Carl Herloszsohn.

WERE I the ocean,
An ocean of love I'd be;
With a thousand arms I'd encircle thee:
Were I the ocean.

Were I the sky,
All the stars I'd displace,
You only heaven should grace:
Were I the sky.

Were I the sun,
I'd extinguish light and warmth,
Night should rest o'er land and sea:
In my and thy heart only,
There light and warmth should be.

— F. A. Porter.

NOT A HEROINE.

I AM afraid that it would be a hopeless matter to make a heroine of Zaida Bennett. There was little of the heroic, nothing of the romantic, in her composition. She was the most matter-of-fact young woman in the world, though her parents were both rather high-strung, imaginative people.

Mr. Bennett was an artist of some eminence, and his wife had won some reputation by her pen, and both were students and scholars in general art and literature.

Zaida, however, cared little either for books or pictures. She had lived in a literary and artistic atmosphere all her life, and yet, strange to tell, she had no particular respect for authors or artists. She used to say she thought them "very much like other people."

She was pleased when her father sold his pictures and when her mother's MSS. were found acceptable; but it was rather because the money so obtained enabled her to buy the things she wanted, than on account of that indefinite glory which young persons call "fame." Zaida had even been heard to say that she thought "an ounce of check was worth a pound of compliment."

When she had nothing else to do she would now and then read "story books," as she called them, but she cared nothing for poetry. She said that if it was not tiresome it stirred you up and made you feel uncomfortable, and where was the use in that? She did not affect to despise those things for which she did not care. Indeed she was incapable of affectation. It was simply that these matters were not in her line. Now, I am afraid that every one will set down my little girl as stupid and disagreeable, but she was any thing but stupid, and in her way she was charming.

She had great good sense, and she had no sort of pretension. She was not so very unselfish, but she tried to do her duty as she understood it; her temper was not all sweetness, but she kept it well under, and she was never self-conscious. She was very pretty, she never made an awkward motion, and she had a knack of having her own way without contention, and of saying and doing the right thing at the right moment. There was no malice in her, and no envy, and she was constitutionally light-hearted. It had never occurred to her to sigh for "an object in life," but an object had lately presented itself, or rather himself, in the shape of Joe Fenton, her old playmate and friend.

Joe and Zaida were engaged, to the great satisfaction of both families. The Rev. Dr. Fenton, his wife and daughters, loved Zaida, and the Bennetts highly approved of Joe.

On that eventful evening on which the young people had settled matters for themselves, Mrs. Bennett naturally held motherly conference with her daughter. I suppose it would be hard to convince many people—Mr. Trollope, for instance—of the fact, but the truth is, many mothers are ill pleased with the prospect of losing their daughters, do not seek for sons-in-law, and are not happy when they present themselves. It was hard for Mrs. Bennett to give up her only one even to such a good, steady fellow as Joe, who adored Zaida with an intensity which, perhaps, that young woman hardly returned, even when she gave him all that was in her little heart to feel; but, as I said, she was not romantic.

"It will be hard for mother to give you up," said Mrs. Bennett, who was a pretty, soft, pleasant woman.

"Well, I know it, mother," said Zaida, sitting down on the floor, "and it troubles me a little to think how you can manage the house alone; but then I suppose

I should have married some time, and you know Joe and all the Fentons so well, I thought you'd like him better than any one else."

"But, Zaida," said the mother, who never quite understood the child's business-like ways, "are you sure you love Joe?"

"Why, yes, mother, or I wouldn't have him. I don't want to go into fits about him; but then I always did think Joe was nice—don't you?—and he's so steady, and by and by he will be drawing a higher salary. And then I've always known him, and I shan't have to get used to him as I should to any one else; and then there is the doctor and Mrs. Fenton and the girls, and I might not like any one else's mother and sisters, and they might not like me; and then we belong to the same church, and though we shan't have much to begin with, I know how to manage, and I think we can be very comfortable; and then, I'm fond of Joe. I think he's real good."

Mrs. Bennett, remembering her own engaged days, the heaven into which Percy Bennett's first avowal had seemed to lift her, far above this work-day world, could not but wonder at her daughter.

"Are you sure that that is quite enough, my darling?"

"Why, mother, we always get along together very well. I understand Joe like a book. He's got a temper of his own, I know, but he's a real Christian, Joe is, and he tries to be good always, and I'm not perfect myself."

"He thinks you are, Zaida."

"Oh well, he's a boy. He don't know any better; but, mother, I think I can get on with him better than if I began by thinking he was an angel, because he ain't, of course; nobody is, and now if little things come along I shan't be dreadfully disappointed and think he's uncongenial and make a great fuss." And Zaida began to comb out her pretty yellow hair.

There was clearly no use in reasoning with such a very reasonable young woman as this. Her mother kissed her, and bade her good-night with a sigh, and Zaida, left to herself, went on combing her hair.

"I do like Joe," she said, as she looked at her own pleasing reflection in the glass. "I wish he was rich, like Will Markham. But I should be tired to death of Will. He's always wanting me to read books and talk about such big things, and I'd never marry just for money. I think it's the meanest thing, and Joe is sure to get on, and I don't see why we shouldn't have real nice times together." And then Miss Bennett said her prayers with rather more devotion than usual, for the little thing was sincerely religious after her fashion.

"I hope I'll make Joe happy, and I mean to have a nice little swing tea-kettle," was Miss Bennett's last thought before she slept the sleep of innocence.

Joe and Zaida settled down for a long American engagement. Joe was in a New York bank, on a very moderate salary, and though his father was a popular clergyman in a large church, there was a great family of the Fentons and other claims upon the doctor's income, more than I could find room to name in these pages. Mr. Bennett could give his daughter something, but not much. The two young people were not at all extravagant in their ideas. Joe would have had the most intense contempt for the distressed lover who parts from his lady-love because he can not give her a lady's maid and an opera box. Joe would have recommended such a man to "go to work and do something," which was his panacea for all the ills of life. Such ills as could be cured by no course of action Joe endured uncomplainingly, perhaps a little grimly. He was sometimes inclined to be down; but he knew his faults, and fought his own occasionally sullen temper as he would have fought any other adversary.

The two lovers were not much alike; but they suited one another, and the course of their love ran very smooth.

Joe gave his mind to his work for his work's sake. It was not in one of Dr. Fenton's children to be a mere hireling. He liked to talk about his business to Zaida, and she interested herself in the matter. Zaida was "little and good." Her aunt Matilda was wont to say that "there was nothing in the girl;" but she was mistaken. The seed of good that was in her was genuine, alive, sound, and healthy to the core. It needs keep on growing and bringing forth fruit, and "a beet that will come up is better than a cedar of Lebanon that dies in the ground."

It happened, however, at the end of a year, that Joe's uncle by marriage, Mr. Harold, found for Joe a

better situation in another bank, the income from which would enable him to set up his modest house-keeping. The said bank was a new one, in Rhinekill-on-the-Hudson, where Mr. Bennett had pitched his tent.

Joe heard the news from his uncle Saturday morning, and that night he went up on the boat to Zaida. "And now, Zed," he concluded, when he had told his story, "why can't we?" Zaida flirted out the bow of his cravat with her little fingers, and replied sweetly: "Well, Joe, if you really want to, I don't see why we can't."

It was May, and it was settled that the marriage was to take place in July. Mr. Bennett and Dr. Fenton put their resources together and gave the pair a little house with a respectable plot of ground on a new street in Rhinekill.

"It's better to have a good lot than a big house," said practical Zaida; "because if you can afford it ever, you can build, but you can't make ground, and I do like a nice place to dry clothes."

Joe and Zaida were as happy over their "place" as two birds building a nest. Joe had a man to dig the garden, and set out some fruit-trees with his own hands, and felt himself a freeholder and a citizen; and Zaida resolved in her mind many things about kitchen and parlor.

In June she went down to New York to stay awhile with the Fentons and do some shopping. The day of her arrival was wet, and she, Mrs. Fenton, and her daughters settled themselves in Mrs. Fenton's room for a comfortable day. This room had been familiar to Zaida ever since she and Lois Fenton had made their play-house and dressed their dolls in the window seat.

Lois Fenton was a noticeable girl, with many gifts, at once shy and outspoken, dreamy and practical, a creature full of contradictions. She and Zaida were very unlike, but were the best of friends. Zaida took Mrs. Fenton's place at the sewing machine, on which instrument she was a great performer, and the machine and the young ladies' talk made a considerable buzz in the room.

Suddenly, Jeannette Fenton, who had been sandwichee in a novel between her seams, pitched her book on the sofa in disgust.

"I never saw such a pair of idiots!" she cried.

"Who?" asked Zaida.

"These two people. Quarreling and sulking, and listening to talk about each other, and running away from one another, and never having the sense to ask a straight question."

"I do get out of patience with novel people," remarked Lois. "Go read some of them, you'd think the post-office was as unknown as in the days before the flood."

"If people quarreled then, they had time to make it up," said Jeannette.

"I dare say they had only just so much more time to make themselves ridiculous," returned Lois.

"Or to be unhappy and alone," said the fair, soft, rather sentimental Alice.

"Well, people in books are absurd," said Zaida, waxing her seam. "Don't you think so, Mrs. Fenton?"

"You must not expect me to abuse story books," said Mrs. Fenton, who was an omnivorous reader.

"They might be just as interesting and not be so silly; but then some people are so. Now, there was a book Will Markham lent me,—he's always wanting one to read something,—and I looked into it on the cars, and the man in it (he's a Jew, by the way), he's desperately in love with a girl, and he sends her a bouquet when she's going to a concert, and she don't carry it because she thinks so much of it, and then he never says a word to her and lets her marry the other man she don't care for a bit. I think he must have been an awful shy Jew," concluded Zaida, who now and then used her words like a school-girl.

"Why, Zaida, you don't mean 'Counterparts?'" cried Alice, horrified.

"I don't remember. It was a real thick book. But I never saw a man that was so easily discouraged as that," said Zaida, from the depths of her experience, and heedless that the girls laughed.

"Well, now, Mrs. Fenton, is there any use in being so senseless?"

"No, my little girl; but then many people are rather senseless."

"But people differ, you know, mother, and if you thought any one you loved didn't care for you, or had said something, could you ask him—her, I mean—do you think—?" said Alice, bewildering herself.